

## **Budget Assumption for 2013**

The Annual Town Meeting will consider the future of the West Harpswell School. Until that decision is made, the Town needs to continue to budget for maintenance and operations. The requested \$40,000 will allow the building to continue to be maintained and used at a minimal level, primarily its west section for library and recreational purposes. In addition, \$10,000 is proposed to begin to build a reserve account for capital purposes if the Town decides to retain the building.

## **West Harpswell School Options for Consideration**

### **1. Sell the property**

Two commercial realtors have provided opinions of value in the neighborhood of \$300,000. Both have indicated the property is unique and that it will not have broad appeal. A prospective buyer will make decisions regarding development which could include commercial or residential use. Presumably the Town would include deed provisions to protect the character of the neighborhood.

Cost to taxpayers: Minimal until sold.

### **2. Retain the property for community use**

Currently the Ash Point Community Library is housed in a portion of the building. The gym is used for basketball practices and open gym. Camp Harpswell (a one week session only) was held in June 2012.

Cost to taxpayers: This type of use will cost, at a minimum, \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year. In addition, the Town will need to build capital reserves for items such as window and roof replacement (see attachment from Portland Glass for window replacement in the older portion of the building.). Some moisture issues occurred in 2012 that may need to be further addressed by installing dehumidification and/or ventilation equipment. The gym floor has buckled in spots as a result of moisture issues developing beneath the floor.

### **3. Lease all or part of the property for use by a Charter School.**

The Town has been approached by a group interested in operating a charter school at the West Harpswell School, at least temporarily. The group has applied to the State Department of Education for approval, and is in discussion with the Selectmen about leasing a significant portion of the building for charter school purposes.

Cost/Return to taxpayers: To be determined. The Charter School group has expressed a willingness to pay for a portion of the maintenance and operations, and has indicated, at least initially, that it will not need the entire school, and

could share space with the Ash Point Community Library and other Town functions.

4. Sell portion of property/building for a senior housing proposal and retain portion of property/building for community use.

The Town has received a proposal from the Brunswick Housing Authority to locate senior apartments in the east wing (older section) of the building. The BHA has expressed some willingness to purchase that portion of the building but no price has been discussed and they would seek to keep their costs as low as possible. Implementation of this plan would be based on a survey of likely interest in the apartment.

Cost/Return to taxpayers: To be determined. Brunswick Housing Authority has indicated it needs only a portion of the building, and the Town could retain ownership and responsibility for the west wing where the library and gym are located. Maintenance and operations of just this portion of the building could cost upwards of \$30,000 per year, and the Town would need to create a capital reserve account.